

THE
Character of the last Daies.
A
SERMON
Preached before
THE
KING.

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Printed by Command.

At the THEATER in Oxford.
Anno Dom. 1675.





2 Pet. 3. 3.

There shall come in the last daies scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.

THE great business of Religion, is to oblige its Votaries to present duty by the awe and expectation of future retribution: and the particular design of the Gospel, the Doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to oblige to this, by the assurance and belief that he who came unto us heretofore to teach his Law, will come again to execute the sanctions of it. Behold saies St. John, Rev. 1. 7. *He cometh with clouds, and every eie shall see him, and they also which pierced him. And he saies of himself, Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* Rev. 22. 12.

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Which weighty truth, tho abundantly establish'd, by all the miracles the types and prophecies that attend the Gospel, is most particularly enforc'd by the two inimitable expresses of Divinity, our Saviors Resurrection from the dead, and his Ascension into Heaven. Concerning the former of which St. Paul remonstrates, Acts 17. 30. *The times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judg the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordain'd: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath rais'd him from the dead.* The other is express'd by St. Peter, Act. 2. 19. *Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets, since the world began.*

Indeed this second advent is the foundation, the support and end of our Religion. *If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable,* 1 Cor. 15. 19. If to the other Articles of our Creed which concern our Savior, there had not succeded the belief, that he shall come again to judg both the quick and the dead, we were as ridiculous as these mockers of the Text pretendus, hated and scorn'd by men, and deserted by Almighty God.

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It will therefore import us highly to examine whether the Christian be so absurd a person as these drolls and merry men would make him, a creature only useful, because he finds them sport and entertainment.

And for a just survey hereof, twill be material to consider,

First the personal qualifications of the Disputers here describ'd, and

Secondly the force of their arguments and discouragements: according to those two prevailing Topics in use among us, from the head of Authority, and that of Reason. And this being well deduc'd, twill not be hard to bring the whole debate to a short and certain issue, both in regard of speculation, and what is more important in reference to practice.

I begin to consider what I first propos'd, the personal qualifications of the Disputers here describ'd. They are said to be scoffers walking after their own lusts.

To be a Scoffer is sure no very laudable Character, being the joint result of Pride and Malice, the doing mischief, and the doing it in sport. So that whereas tis said that the Flatterer is the worst of tame beasts, and the Detractor of wild, the Scoffer has the ferity of both. Amidst the pretences to Urbanity, and being pleasant company, he is the bane of all society, *the poison of Asps is under his lips, his teeth are spears and arrowes, and his tongue a sharp sword*, P^{sa}. 5. 7. Any injury is supportable, that has not contempt and scorn super-

added to it ; we can better bear the wounds, then the insultings of an enemy ; or if we must submit to that, we would not have our understandings trampled on ; be run down like fools and Idiots, or fall the victims of petulant ill nature, edg'd with envenom'd wit.

But as this temper is most injurious and unso-
ciable ; tis also ignorant and indocile. The sure
effect of knowledg, is an humble sense of the want
of it : the deeper we immerse our selves in any
Art or Science, the greater and more insuperable
difficulties are started by us : and the same event
happens to all industrious enquirers, which besel
Socrates ; to arrive at last to this one great dis-
covery, that they know nothing. Tis the pecu-
liar priviledg of the ignorant and half-wited, by
thinking well of their own skill and acquisitions,
to make it impossible for them to have any. *Seeſt
thou a man wise in his own eyes, saies Solomon, there
is more hope of a fool then of him, Prov. 26. 12. and
at the 9. Chap. ver. 7, 8. He that reproveth a scorner
getteth himself a shame, and he that rebuketh a wick-
ed man getteth himself a blot : rebuke not a scorner
least he hate thee : rebuke a wise man and he will
love thee. and Chap. 14. ver. 6. A scorner seeketh
wisdom, and findeth it not.*

But farther, over and above the before-men-
tion'd ingredients, of pride, ill nature, and incor-
rigible folly ; the mockers of the Text are branded
with immorality and vice : to *walk after their own
lusts*. And sure there cannot be a more prodi-
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gious impudence, then that the guilty and obnoxious, persons liable to the severest punishments as well as censures, should dare to awaken observation, by being sharp on others. But so it is, the man that walks in the *counsel of the ungodly, and has stood in the way of sinners*, will not fail to recreate himself by sitting down in the seat of the scornful. *Aristotle* truly resolv'd that the sensual or passionate were incapable of receiving moral knowledg, and tis hard that they who are not in a possibility to be learners, should take upon them to be judges.

But in the present case tis their great concern and interest not to be instructed. To convince the sensual man that there is a future doom, is to sour all his joies, and torment him before the time. So that to pass all other grounds of prejudice, whatever is suggested by these mockers of the Text, their testimony at least is not to be consider'd, they being brib'd and led aside by interest to all that they assert.

And let this suffice to have bin said of the personal qualifications of the disputers against a future judgment. I come now to examin the force of their discourfings.

Where first, tis obvious to advert, that the Enquiry, *Where is the promise of his coming*, is very extravagantly made.

As the Apostle saies, that *hope which is seen is not hope*, Rom. 8. 24. so a promise perform'd is not a promise, all its obligation is ceast. But tho our

pacts and undertakings fall not under the notice of our senses, it do's not therefore follow they are nothing. Upon this transient blast of emty air, hangs all the entercourse and traffic of the world. If we will trust altogether to our eies, and nothing to promises and words, we must expect the self same diffidence from others; and so be enemies and out-lawes to mankind.

Nor is the delaying of performance a prejudice against it. Tis true the morrow is to us a distant thing, however suddenly expected: and therefore *Martial* did not amiss to enquire of one who still undertook for the next day, where his to morrow dwelt, whether in *Parthia* or *Armenia*? But with Almighty God, every thing however distant it may seem, is actually present: and as whatever really is, however contingently it happen'd, certainly and necessarily is; so whatever he has promis'd, must certainly and necessarily be: nay should be reckon'd on as already don.

But the discourings of the mockers in the Text, if they amount to any thing will run thus. All things continue as they were since the beginning of the Creation, therefore our Saviors promise of coming to judge the world is vain and frustaneous. The weakness of which reasoning, the Apostle effectually Jaies open, by destroying every part of it. First he denies the proposition, or supposal that all things continue as they were since the Creation: and Secondly he denies the conse-

quence drawn from thence, Tho all things did continue, it no way follows they shall for ever do so; and that the promise of a future change will not hereafter be accomplisht.

As to the Proposition, it is observable, that the Creation of the world is frankly here acknowledged, tho it be to the evident disadvantage of the design'd Hypothesis. If the world were once Created, in that Act however transient, it has shew'd its self liable to the greatest change, since there are the same steps from not being unto being, as there are back again the contrary way: with this variety, that it is easier to pass from a habit to its privation, then it was from the privation to advance into the habit: and therefore as the Universe did not exist heretofore, so it may likewise not exist hereafter.

But the truth is, the Origen of the World is a matter so notorious, that even *Epicurus* and his followers could not over-look it; and thought it a less absurdity to make a casual concurse of Atomes, produce all the powers, the motion, the beauty, and order of the World, then to imagin it to have no beginning. And to this they were induced not only by attending the chain of causes, which in a succession of finite beings, could not be infinite: but more particularly, from the observation of those evident marks of newness, which appear every where thro-out the world; and which are substantially urg'd by the Epicurean Apostle *Lucretius* in his 5 Book. I mean, the growth of
Arts

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Arts and Sciences, the plantation of Countries, the date of Histories, the Analogy of Languages, and the like.

But to pass forward. Whereas tis urg'd by our Disputers, that since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they did since the Creation, tis obvious to reply, that all things do not continue as they were, because the Fathers are fallen asleep: the destruction of all preceding generations, being a very remarkable mutation in the Universe. For however by constant successions the world has bin supplied, yet since tis evident that all the parts are in perpetual flux and motion, the whole which is nothing but an aggregate of those parts, must needs be of the same complexion. So that upon the matter the argument comes to this. All things continue as they were since the Creation, because nothing continues as it was since the Creation.

Tis true the World has lasted a long time, but so have divers other things, which many ages since have perisht, as also others which we see are perishing. Let us consider artificial compositions, for instance Buildings; whereof the parts constantly decay and moulder: and tho by diligent repairs, the fabric is maintain'd so as to be habitable for several Ages, yet at last in spight of all supplies, it sinks into a ruine. And thus it fares in that other fabric of our Bodies, which we know are liable to a thousand accidents, every one of which is able to destroy us: and tho by the supply of food, and careful tendance we are not only maintain'd

tain'd in life, but seem to grow and to be nurisht; yet after a set period of years the whole drops down, and by no art or care can be preserv'd. So likewise in Societies, that Aggregate of separate members allied together by civil bonds of union, which we call the body Politic; these we see preserve the same establishment, and settled form of government for several Centuries of years, and notwithstanding many shocks and great mutations, recover their pristin constitution: yet tis observ'd that there awaits even them a fatal period, and that after 6 or 700, or at most 1000 years they are totally dissolv'd and overthrown.

From the which instances tis easy to collect, that in Systems of all kinds, whether artificial, natural, or political, every thing is transient and engag'd to dissolution. And tho the Universe in proportion to its vaster bulk, have a much larger term assign'd to its duration, then is prefixt to trivial little beings, all equally must share in the same common law of fate, and at length perish by inevitable ruine.

The age of Man is by *David* Pl. 50. declar'd to be threescore years and 10, that of Nations and Governments is esteem'd as 100 unto 10, so that 6 or 700 years makes up their ordinary period. Now whether the Universe go on by like progression, and in accordance to the celebrated tradition, its rate be as 1000 is to 10, and after a Millenary week (and we know that the Apostle saies 1000 years is with God

Almighty but as one day,) the everlasting Sabbath shall commence, and * 2000 years having past before the Law, 2000 under it, and 2000 in the Gospel, the seventh thousand shall bring on the period of all accounts, when time shall be no more; I will not go about to calculate. As God has conceled from us the day of our death, and that of the destruction of Empires, so has he of the Universe. In the mean time tis sure more reasonable from the premises laid down, to inferr the future destruction of the world and future doom, then the denial of it; especially since in consequence to what has bin surmis'd, the times wherein the Gospel was first preach't, are distinctively said to be the *last times*, Act. 2. 17. and they who then liv'd, to be those upon whom, *the ends of the world are come*. To which we may subjoin, that our Savior has interpos'd his promise, that the regular date shall not be permitted to run out, and *for the Eleets sake those daies shall be shortned*. Luk. 24. 22.

But for a farther confutation of these Disputers, the Apostle by a memorable instance, that of the Flood, an event confest by the whole heathen world, the notice of it being transmitted down by general tradition, by Histories of all Nations, and by the Rites and Ceremonies of their Religions, makes it manifest that all things have not, as they suggest, continued as they were from the begin-

^a *Thalmud. Abod. Zara. c. 1. fol 9. R. Ketina. in Pf. 92. Hilar. in 17 Mat. Just. Mart. in Dial. cum Tryph. & quest. ad Orthod. 71. Iren. l. 5. c. 28: 30. Cyr. l. de exhort. Mart. Laſtant. l. 7. c. 14. b* *Abyden. Beros. Nic. Damasc. Plat. in Tim. Suidas in ὑποφύλαξ ex Apollin.*

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II

ning of the Creation. *This*, saies the Apostle ver. 5. *they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the Heavens were of Old, and the Earth standing out of the water, and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perisht. But the Heavens and the Earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserv'd unto fire, against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* That is, men (unless wilfully blind) must acknowledge the Creation to be an unaccountable riddle of Omnipotence: the habitable Earth being so placed, that it indeed stands out of the waters, but yet so as to be really within the waters, the surface of the liquid Element being convexe, and in its workings demonstrably above the level of the shores that bound it: and nothing but the word of God that said unto the waves, *Thus far shall you go and no farther*, during the first Ages of the world with-held that general inundation, which afterward succeeded; when, as the Scripture expresses it, *the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windowes of Heaven, till then shut up, were open'd*, Gen. 7. 11. whereupon immediatly *the waters prevail'd upon the Earth*. And on the other side, the force of the Promise of the same God of truth, set down at the 21 verse of the 8 Chapter, is the only dam and fence which ever since secures from a repeted ruine. Therefore the Heaven and Earth subsist, because they are reserv'd against the general conflagration. Which (by the way) was the common expectation of the Hea-

then World, according to that known perswasion of *Platonics*, *Stoics*, and *Epicureans* also, and celebrated frequently by the Doctors of Heathen Theology the Poets. In the same manner we see Prisons made strong, and safely guarded, that the Malefactors may be forth coming at the Assize and goal delivery. And therefore upon a true account, the preservation of the world, is so far from being an argument against a future Judgment, that in reference to it, its fabric is kept up, and hitherto continued.

In like manner also, whereas ill men please themselves much in their impunity, and because they have liv'd long without controul, think they shall for ever do so; they have all reason to consider, that this success is of ominous abode unto them: their condition is the same with that of the guilty prisoner, who is therefore fed upon the public charge and carefully secur'd, because he is reserv'd to be brought forth to Execution: when in the interim the honest man is left at large, without that care, or any notice taken of him.

Tis true indeed God has besides another more kind intendment, when he indulges this impunity, if wicked men would be receptive of it: they therefore are repriev'd, that they may have an opportunity to sue their pardon out, and reconcile themselves to their offended Judge: for so it follows in the context, ver. 9. *The Lord is not slack concern.*

a Plat. in Tim. Senec. Nat. quæst. 3. 13. Ep. ad Polyb. Minut. Fel. Ovid. Metam. l. 1. f. 7. Lucan. l. 1. Hyssasp. in Euseb. Præp. Justin in Apol.

ing his promise (as some men account slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And this consideration is of an astonishing importance, that the best argument men can frame against the existence of Almighty God, and his future Judgment, is that he is infinitely good, and that he passes over those indignities, which in the opinion of the guilty Authors are beyond all sufferance. They would not have him be a revenger of their foul demerits; no more would he himself: he would be a God to bless, to save and pardon, but not to punish and destroy; and therefore, wretched as they are, they would not have him be at all: and madly throw away their hopes, when they would rid themselves of fear. To such a miserable issue do's brutish guilt engage; makes it the interest of men that there should be no Omnipotence to support the world, or Providence to guide it; no power in Heaven to bless and to protect; and what is yet more desperate, no mercy there to pardon and forgive.

But farther, suppose no promise had bin made of a future coming to Judgment, it will by no means follow that there will be none; or that such a dreadful, tho but contingent possibility, should reasonably be laught at and contemn'd. Many things are daily don by us which we never engag'd before hand that we would do; and sure tis equal, that the most free agent should be allowed the self same liberty.

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But lastly, to make the most advantagious supposal for these Disputers of the Text, that God had said, nay sworn that he would not come to Judgment; with what face can they, who frequently do what they have bound themselves by horrid execrations never to attempt, expect a greater veracity from others then they exercise themselves? Moreover since in all things else they disbelieve Almighty God, why should they credit him in this? or if they will let him be veracious in this one instance, how are they sure he meant in earnest what he spoke, and did not rally, as they love to do? 'Tis certain the time will come, when he will transcribe their practice, and in their fatal exigence, *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes*: nor can they easily be sure, that he has not begun to treat them in their own way already.

Now all this being put together, can any thing be more unaccountable, then that men should by such ropes of sand let themselves down to Hell, by such pitiful inconsequences, which yet are the best proofs the matter can afford, think they have baffled all the expectations and fears, nay all the possibilities; for nothing else can give security of future Judgment?

Yet so it is, these stupid Arguers have voted themselves to be the Masters of Reason, and so they are resolv'd to be. A dull inconsequence, pointed with a blasphemous scoffe, in despite of Logic and common sense, is Wit and demonstration to boot: and all they that own an awe of God, a love of

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Vertue, and fear of Hell, are fools and mad men, and tis lost labor to dispute against it. These Doctors of the scorers Chair, are (if it may be) more infallible then that of Rome.

I shall not therefore any farther attempt to undeceive them: but having thus unravel'd the disputings of the Text in point of consequence and argument, I shall now take leave to look upon them in another light; as they are a recital of a Prophecy, and thereby offer to us a farther proof of all that they propose: To wit

The appearance of these scoffers in the World who laugh at all Religion, and despise a future Judgment, when so ere it happens, is its self a very signal mark of its approach.

I stir up, saies St. Peter, at the beginning of this Chapter, and the words immediatly preceding the Text, your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last daies scoffers, &c. To which St. Jude exactly accords at the 17 and 18 verses of his Epistle, *Beloved remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.* And St. Paul 1 Thes. 5. 1. *Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for you your selves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night:*

night : for when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh, &c. All which is in the same manner declar'd by our Savior himself, Mat. 24. 37. who saies that his coming will resemble that of the Flood, which fell upon a generation of men *as they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*, and despis'd the warning and predictions of *Noah the Preacher of righteousness*, as *St Peter* calls him in the fore-going Chapter to the Text.

Nor may it be suggested, that the scoffing at Religion and a future Judgment, is no such new thing in the world as to be any way remarkable, and made the Character of the greatest revolution that ever was. For tho there have bin alwaies debauched and profligate persons more then a good many; yet to have them openly scoffe at Religion, do it with assurance and impunity, is a thing so unusual, as may justly ground the observation laid upon it. Indeed for a *fool to say in his heart there is no God*, is not without example: but for a Sect of men to say it with their mouth, dictate it as Philosophy, and for that be esteem'd Wits and Masters of Reason, is utterly without the precedents of ancient times, and an atchievment to commence with the last dotage of the world: a prodigy great enough to go hand in hand with *the Suns being darkned, and the Moons not giving her light, the Stars falling from their orbs, and the powers of Heaven being shaken*, mention'd by our Savior as the prologues of his second coming at the 24 of *St. Mathew*, the place before recited. As

As no Nation in the world however barbarous has bin found to be without Religion; so none has bin without a concern for it. By Gods law among the *Jews*, the Blasphemer was to be put to death; and Levit. 24. we see that sanction by Gods particular command put in Execution. Which severity afterward obtain'd, even then when the worship of the nation diverted to Idolatry: for when *Gideon* had cut down the consecrated Grove of *Baal*, and destroyed his Altar, Judg. 6. his life was required as an expiation of the fact. *Nebuchadnezzar*, tho a Heathen Prince, thought himself oblig'd to vindicate the honor not only of his *Bel*, but also of the God of *Israel*; and as we read Dan. 3. 29. decreed that if any one should *speake amiss against him, he should be cut in pieces, and his house be made a dunghill*. At *Ephesus*, upon the suggestion that the honor of *Diana* had bin toucht, *the whole city was put into a confusion*, Act. 19. and at the 17 we find St. *Paul* question'd at *Athens* for being a *setter forth of strange Gods*, and probably would not have escaped, had the accusation run, that he deni'd the old. For in that place a *Diagoras, Theodorus, Anaxagoras, Stilpo, Protagoras* and others were on this account punisht by banishments, pecuniary mulcts and confiscations, and by death it self. Nay what is most remarkable, and particular to our present purpose, when *Alcibiades* had here in the jollity of a feast indulged unto his Wit, and made sport upon the Rites of

a Said. in *Diag. Diog. Laert. Corn. Nep. in Alcib.*

Ceres, in mockery personating the Priest, tho he was their General in a most important war, they recall'd him home, who not returning, they proscrib'd his Person, seiz'd his Estate, and publicly devoted him by solemn execrations.

It would be endless to deduce this subject thro ancient History: all the persecutions with so much blood and fury rais'd against Christians, are so many instances of this very matter; they all arising from no other ground then the zeal they had for their false Gods, and an opinion that Christians were Atheists and Blasphemers, that mockt at their Devotions, and despis'd their Deities.

Now whether it be reasonable for us, to have less veneration and esteem for the true God, then they had for the false, and verify whatever was suggested by the Heathen, it will not be difficult to determin. But if after the preaching of the Gospel, wherein are made discoveries of the Majesty of God and of his mercy, beyond any vouchsaf'd to former ages, men shall have less regard of Him and of his Honor, and after that his Son has for our sakes expos'd himself to shame and mockery, and become of no reputation, we shall therefore add to his inanition, and let him be of none with us; converting all the obliging circumstances of his life and death to his continued reproch; crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame: and farther, if these multiplied, these unaccountable indignities, which in former times had certainly bin Capital, shall now become a Specimen
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of parts and education ; be committed by the Actors with bold insolence, and by the Hearers entertain'd with plesure and applause ; these practices thus put together and enhanc'd, upon a sober estimate must prove, such as do carry with them as the blackest guilt, to the most direful ominous abode.

That this Age of ours has somewhat of mockery for its particular Genius, so that scarce any thing is so entertaining, as to sport with the misadventures or failances of others ; nor no faculty more recommending then the being dextrous in turning serious things to Ridicule, I think is a truth so notorious, that I may say it without offence to any : they that are passive in these skirmishes, being sufficiently sensible of what they suffer ; and they that are active, not desiring to concele or disown their Talent : nay both sorts at one time or other being active, those that have wit to shew it, and those that have none to pretend to it. Tho alas, what great proof is it of wit, to make others laugh ? which an Idiot can do as effectually by having none : and as to what is the height of that celebrated faculty, and is thought true bearing wit, the saying sharp unexpected rambling things, tis most happily acquir'd by an approach to drunkenness or frenzy ; and twill be no very advantageous barter, to loose our understandings to advance our wit.

The * Masters of Greek and Roman Rhetoric in their Institutions, discourse indeed of *causing laughter* as a piece of the Art which they pretend

* *Arist. Rhet. l. 3. Quintil. Instit. l. 6.*

to teach: but they tell us tis only to be allowed in those causes which admit no other defence. The Buffoon in a desperate exigence is to relieve the Orator, impudence to supply the place of argument, and wit fill up the room of sense: as we see men who have no better weapon, think it no shame to rake the canal, and secure themselves by throwing dirt.

But what shall we say of those, who have introduc'd this way of fight into the Christian Warfare? those Schole divinity Drolls of this our Age, who defend the Faith, by destroying Charity, at-taque their fellow-men by those opprobrious methods of disputing, by scoffs and railing accusations, with which twere not allowable to oppose the Devil himself, Jud. 9. Tis certainly great pity a good cause should be asserted by such arguments as libel and reproch it; such as cannot be urg'd but by the worst of Men, and which even they will not produce, till that all others fail them. And were those flowers of Rhetoric weeded out of our late controversial books, we should find large Volumes shrink into Manuals, and be as little in their bulk, as they are in their conviction. Where ere this procedure takes place, tis not at all material on what side the truth lies; a Jest will as effectually provide an answer to a demonstration, as to the most manifest inconsequence. The brightest evidence and vertue disguis'd and render'd monstrous by burlesque, like the Primitive Christians in the skins of wild beasts, will easily be worried and

and destroyed. Nay so it fares, that the most venerable persons, things, and actions, are most liable to be thus expos'd and made ridiculous: for whatever this beloved acquisition proves, be it the gift of Nature, meant certainly for better purposes, or the product of drunkenness or frenzy, or what is yet a shorter method, of spight or malice, it has a peculiar faculty to pervert the best and most useful things, traducing sobriety for dulness, gravity for foppishness, order for formality, learning for pedantry, and is most immediatly prepar'd to cut the nerves of Government, by *despising Dominion, and speaking evil of Dignities*, Jude 8.

These are the men, who, as the roial Psalmist tells us, *make Songs of him*, who pretend therein not only to impunity, but authoritative right; and say, they are *those who ought to speake*. When these are once on the Tribunal, nothing can scape their sentence, the modesty of Virgins, learning of Scholars, wisdom of Counsellors, integrity of Magistrates, honor of Nobles, the dearest interests of all conditions and estates are laugh't away, as things not worth the keeping. Nay Majesty its self is here obnoxious, treated as our Savior was in order to his Crucifixion; arai'd in a ridiculous robe, arm'd with a reed instead of a roial Scepter, then mockt and bowed to in reproch, and then tis thought high time to hang it on a tree. This leud familiarity ends in the worst contempt, and nothing can be so unhappy as Authority when baffled. The Coffee-house Rebell is more mischievous, then he that
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takes the field; and a Prince is sooner murder'd with a libell, then a sword. And therefore it will concern those who are in Authority to consider of what effect it may be, that there are so many mockers of this form and level, in these last times of ours.

My present enquiry is after those of a higher dispensation, who *set their mouth against Heaven*, and defy God and Providence; which yet is but a natural emprovement of the other, and no less powerfully, if not much more destructive of Government and Lawes. And therefore it will also be the Magistrates great interest, as tis their highest duty, to be concern'd herein.

To these ungodly mockers, walking after their own lusts, proud as they are, and confident that the day of Judgment will either never be, or is far off; I shall not add more words upon that Head to their disturbance; but mind them of another day, which they cannot deny to be approaching, I mean the day of Death, that *sentence of the Lord over all flesh*, as the Wise man calls it, which is the day of Judgment to each particular person, as that of Doom is to the World.

And will these mockers ask in scorn where is this promise of his coming? tho the Fathers are fast asleep, do they hope by a peculiar privilege to continue still, and reverse the general law of the Creation? If the long day of the Fathers had a night who after 7, 8, or 900 years went down to sleep in dust, and when they did so there was no inquisition in the grave, whether the date had
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bin so many hours, but all their labors vanish as they did, in dull forgetfulness and silence; shall our winter Solstice day, whose Sun scarcely looks over the Horizon, but instantly starts back again to dwell upon the other World, so lye upon our hands, as if the Sun were to stand still as it did in *Joshuas* time, or to go back as it did in *Hexechias*, that we might frolic it without disturbance, in everlasting riot and excess?

The sensual Epicure describ'd at the 12 of St. Luke, who said unto his soul, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*: tho he only overlookt, and not deni'd a Providence, was stopt in his carriere by hasty vengeance, which pronounc'd this irreversible decree, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*

And let our jolly men of dissolute ungodly life, who notwithstanding the concerns of their immortal soul, are at leisure to make sport with every thing however Sacred, who with scorn and greediness pursue unlawful pleasures, and bid defiance to Almighty Justice, lay their hands upon their breast, and ask themselves at what ensurance office they have secur'd a longer date of life: how they come to know their soul shall not be requir'd: or if it be, how well they are prepar'd to give an answer to the question but now askt. This very sentence at this moment is really pronounc'd against many thousands in the world, who ere to morrows night will

will breath their last ; of which number not one single person that now hears me, is sure that he is not.

Have they debated calmly with themselves what death is, how many unwelcome circumstances are huddled up in that short word? Can they willingly forego their houses and estates, their tables and their beds, and bid a long farwell to their dear company, their paramours and flatterers, lying gasty, and cold, and senseless, imprison'd in a Coffin, and immur'd in Earth? To speak in the language of the Scripture, will *the tender and delicate women, who would scarce adventure to put their feet unto the ground thro delicacy*, Deut. 28. be content to be despoil'd of their *rings and jewels, the changeable suits of apparell, the mantles, the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses and fine linen, the hoods and veiles*, Isa. 3. and, as he adds, take in exchange, *insted of a sweet smell a stink, insted of a girdle a rent, insted of well-set hair baldness, and burning insted of beauty?*

But this is not all, will they be willing to come to the Tribunal of their Maker, and render an account of all the words, the thoughts, the actions and omissions of an ill led life? answer for their noon-day insolence, and mid-night revels; answer for their own and others guilts: the sin of their rebellion, and greater sin of their impenitence: the accusations of offended justice, and deeper charge of slighted Mercy?

Or lastly can they after the confusion and horror,

ror, of having all their guilt set in aray before them, enhanc'd by the no less numerous overtures of grace and mercy, out-brave that dreadful sentence of *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels*, Mat. 25. Will they maintain the jolly humor there, and like the three Children in the *Babylonian* furnace, sing in the midst of flames, and resemble them in being untoucht by pain, as they shall in not being wasted and devour'd? Will they find arguments of mockery and laughter, in the *place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*?

If they can do this, on Gods name let them mock on, deny a future Judgment, or what is more generous and brave, let them provoke and dare it. But if they cannot dwell *with the devouring fire, nor abide with everlasting burnings*, Isa. 33. If they cannot wrestle with Omnipotence, nor *have an arm like God*; twill be advisable, to take a timely warning, and according to the counsel given to *Job*, Chap. 41. 8. to *think upon the battell, and do no more.*

I shall close all with the inference, and in the words of *St. Peter* pursuant to my Text. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolv'd, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? looking for and*

hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolv'd, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we according to his promise look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore beloved seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless: and account that the long-suffering of the Lord is Salvation. Ye therefore, seeing you know these things before, beware least ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: to him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

FINIS.